

Social Anxiety, Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction Among Adults Working from Home and Office

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ABSTRACT

Social anxiety and self-esteem play a central role in an individual's life satisfaction. This study was aimed at to study social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction among working adults post the first wave of the Covid 19 pandemic in India considering that working from home involved lack of physical face to face interaction, socialization and absence of the regular personal validation from peer and colleagues. The data was collected from 130 professions from the city of Bengaluru and was analyzed for interaction of gender on their social anxiety (social interaction anxiety and social performance), self-esteem and life satisfaction. Exploratory and empirical research design was used to investigate the research question and to verify the hypotheses. The scales which were used to collect the data were: the Liebowitz Social Anxiety scale, the Rosenberg Self Esteem scale and Questions on Life Satisfaction scale. The results suggest that there is no significant difference between individuals working from home and office in social anxiety with its sub areas, self-esteem and life satisfaction. There is no significant correlation found between life satisfaction, self-esteem and social interaction anxiety.

Keywords: *Social Anxiety, Self Esteem, Life Satisfaction, Working Adults*

A person with social anxiety may have trouble making friends and maintaining close relationships. Fear of social interaction may even result in missed opportunities. An inability to control the symptoms often leads to frustration, feelings of hopelessness, isolation, and ultimately depression. Social anxiety causes both physical and emotional symptoms before, during, or after social interactions.

Research shows that people with social anxiety are more likely to be single, unemployed and attain a lower level of education. Their career path, courses and subjects in study may be chosen to minimize or avoid social interaction altogether. People living with social anxiety have an intense and persistent fear of embarrassment, humiliation, or rejection from others. It can lead them to avoid social situations. People living with social anxiety often avoid interactions with other people to avoid feeling afraid.

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Self-esteem is the confidence in one's worth or abilities. It is used to describe a person's overall subjective sense of personal worth or value. In other words, self-esteem may be defined as how much one appreciates and like oneself regardless of the circumstances. It is the way people think about themselves and how worthwhile they feel. It can be considered a sort of measure of how much a person "values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or like him or herself" (Adler & Stewart, 2004).

Life satisfaction is the way in which people show their emotions, feelings (moods) and how they feel about their directions and options for the future. It is a measure of well-being assessed in terms of mood, satisfaction with relationships, achieved goals, self-concepts and self-perceived ability to cope with one's daily life. Life satisfaction involves a favorable attitude towards one's life rather than an assessment of current feelings.

Work from home has become the new trend now due to the Global pandemic COVID 19. Work from home describes work being done remotely, instead at office. The acronym "WFH" is used as a nickname for the concept. It is a modern work approach enabled through internet and mobility wherein irrespective of the physical location of an individual work can be done. Work from home is also known as Working Remotely or telecommuting which implies that the employee is working from a remote location usually home.

Baker E., Avery, G.C. & Crawford, J. (2007) studied on Satisfaction and Perceived productivity when professionals work from home. There were 20 organizations who participated and 130 questionnaires were distributed over a six-month period. The components of four influence factors and the outcome measures are described, starting with the influence factors. The results confirm that the respondents WFH on a regular basis and are experienced with this mode of work. Indeed, 68 percent worked from home more than one day per week and 68 percent worked between one to three days weekly from home. Only 18percent worked for their organization for four or more years is consistent with Barnes' (1994) report that WFH employees tend to be long serving job holders.

Nargarajan Muthkrishnan (2021) studied work from home in India: An Effective Toole or a threat for productivity loss from an outlook of Enterprise Risk Management. The results show that industries like: Construction, production, project management and manufacturing sector facing difficulties and poor performance during COVID-19. These are the activities needed physical presence and work from home options are worthless in such situation where presence of mind and physical existence is needed.

Evangelia Demerouti, Sabine AE Geurts, Arnold B Baker & Martin Euema (2007) studied the impact of shift work on work-home conflict, job attitudes and health. The aim of the study was designed to test the impact of rotation and timing if shifts on work-home conflict, job attitudes, health and absenteeism among the military police. A total of 3122 employees participated in the study. Discriminant analysis was used to examine the relationships between rotation and timing of shifts on the one hand, and the outcome measures on the other. Rotation was most clearly related to unfavorable job attitudes (namely job satisfaction, cynicism, turnover intentions and professional efficacy), whereas timing was most clearly related to increased work-home conflict. The results suggest that fixed non-day shifts weekends (i.e., during highly valuable times) should be avoided in order to minimize the conflict between work & home and that rotation rosters should be designed with a high degree of individualization and flexibility.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults working from home and office.

Objective

- To know the differences between adults working from home and office in their social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction.
- To understand the relationship between social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults working from home and office.

Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant difference between adults working from home and office in their social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction.

H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults working from home and office.

Research Question

- Do adults working from home and office significantly differ in their social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction?

Research Design

Exploratory and empirical research design was used to investigate the research question and to verify the hypotheses.

Variables

- Independent variable: Working Status – working from home and working from office.
- Dependent variable: Social Anxiety, Self Esteem and Life Satisfaction.

Operational Definitions

- **Social Anxiety:** Anxiety that causes extreme fear in social settings like trouble talking to people, meeting new people and attending social gatherings.
- **Self Esteem:** A persons over all sense of his or her values or worth.
- **Life Satisfaction:** It is the way in which people show their emotions, feelings and how they feel about their directions and options.
- **Working adults:** Those who are employed part time or full time and who have only one job or have more than one job but consider one of them to be their primary job.
- **Work from home:** It is a concept where the employee can do his or her job from home.
- **Work from office:** A place in which business, clerical or professional activities are conducted.

Sample

The sample comprised of 130 working adults using purposive sampling method.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adults between early 20's years to mid 50 years.
- Adults who are working either from home or office.
- Adults residing in urban areas.

Exclusion Criteria

- Adults below 20 years and above mid 50 years.
- Adults who are unemployed are excluded.
- Adults who cannot read and write English.

Instruments

- 1. Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz,2001):** The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) is a 24-item, self-rated scale used to assess how social anxiety plays a role in your life across a variety of situations.
- 2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg,1965):** A 10-item scale that measure global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be unidimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- 3. Questions On Life Satisfaction (Eli Lily,2001):** Health-related QOL relates to how an individual feels, functions and responds in daily life. It provides additional endpoints in clinical trials designed to assess the efficacy of such therapy.

Procedure for data collection

The data was collected using the google forms where the participants were firstly briefed about the study and consent was taken. Further the socio demographic details and responses on the three scales was collected.

Procedure for analysis

The collected responses were transferred to SPSS. To examine the difference between adults working from home and office, independent sample t test was used. Pearson product moment correlation was done to understand the relationship between social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Mean, Standard deviation and Independent sample t test of adults working from home and office in social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction

		Mean	SD	t	df	p
Social Interaction Anxiety	Work from office	12.34	8.73	0.19 ^{NS}	128	0.84
	Work from home	12.66	7.56			
Performance Anxiety	Work from office	16.20	10.11	0.00 ^{NS}	128	0.99
	Work from home	16.20	8.16			
Social Anxiety	Work from office	28.55	18.45	0.09 ^{NS}	128	0.92
	Work from home	28.86	15.08			
Self-Esteem	Work from office	29.82	4.00	0.30 ^{NS}	128	0.76
	Work from home	30.13	5.92			
Life Satisfaction	Work from office	19.13	7.15	0.43 ^{NS}	128	0.66
	Work from home	18.49	7.00			

NS- Not Significant

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Table 2 Pearson product moment correlation of adults working from office on social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction

		Self Esteem	Life Satisfaction
Social Interaction Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.50**	0.16 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.38
Performance Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.47**	0.29 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.12
Social Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.49**	0.23 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.21
Self-Esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.81 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.67

**p<0.01, NS- Not Significant

Table 3 Pearson product moment correlation of adults working from home on social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction

		Self Esteem	Life Satisfaction
Social Interaction Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.24*	-0.03 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	0.72
Performance Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.16 ^{NS}	-0.08 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.11	0.38
Social Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	-0.20*	-0.06 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.03	0.51
Self-Esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	0.10 ^{NS}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.28

*p<0.05, NS- Not Significant

The above table shows mean and standard deviation of working adults in Social Interaction Anxiety, Performance Anxiety, Social Anxiety, Self Esteem and Life Satisfaction. The independent sample t test results show that the null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant difference between adults working home and office in Social Anxiety with its sub areas, self-esteem and life satisfaction” is not rejected. ($p > 0.01$). There is no significant difference between adults working from home and office in their social anxiety, self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis results show that there is significant negative correlation between Social Interaction Anxiety, Performance Anxiety and Social Anxiety with Self Esteem among adults working from office. Self Esteem and Social Anxiety with its sub areas is not correlated with Life Satisfaction among adults working from office. This does not completely reject the null hypothesis which states “There is no significant relationship between Social Anxiety, Self – Esteem and Life Satisfaction among adults working from office”.

Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis results show that there is significant negative correlation between Social Interaction Anxiety and Social Anxiety with Self Esteem among adults working from home. Life Satisfaction, Self Esteem and Social Anxiety with its sub areas are not correlated among adults working from office. This does not reject the null hypotheses which states” There is no significant relationship between Social Anxiety, Self Esteem and Life Satisfaction among adults working from home”.

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Individuals with social anxiety, who are working from office have negative correlation with self-esteem. Working from home may seem like the perfect fit for people who have social anxiety, giving them an opportunity to work at home, away from situations likely to cause stress.

Telephonic interviews were conducted with a few participants. They felt that their self-esteem and life satisfaction have been affected due to working from home before and after the COVID 19 pandemic in the following ways: in person interactions with other individuals have become limited, hence not much satisfaction is felt unlike before. Since they are working from home it has become an hindrance for them not to be a part of their team which cause problems in executing tasks and importance is not given to all the elements at work. Sitting at home, attending online meetings and trying organize a pitch (proposal) becomes a challenging task.

Some of the participants on the contrary felt that there is not much of change which can be seen in self- esteem and life satisfaction. They have adapted to working from home which has become convenient for them which results in a positive effect on self- esteem and on life satisfaction. However, some of the women felt that they are not very satisfied with their life and did not find any difference in their self -esteem while others felt their self - esteem did reduce. They also stated that they have learnt a lot, improved their skills and with the help of technology they were able to connect with their children around the globe which made them feel good. Since they are working from home it has become stressful on them as they have to balance their personal and professional lives at the same time.

Some reported that they can spend more time with their family by working from home. Others felt that more work needs to be put in which results in less quality time with the family and adjustments to be made in their daily routine. As they work from home, they find it difficult to keep track if they are on duty or off duty as there is no set working hours/ timings. They also miss spending time with their friends or colleagues at the work place.

They also reported office atmosphere helps them to build & sustain professionalism. While others feel that it is difficult to balance work and responsibilities, can't work continuously, the home gives a sense of a relaxed atmosphere. On the contrary, some women felt that it becomes challenging to prioritize the household chores and the office work which leads to stress. At home things need to be done on time, they cannot compromise the working hours which leads to difficulty in balancing their work.

Some of the disadvantages of working from Home are: there is a lack in team interaction, poor time management, they need to attend to non -office calls, high number of video calls and conferences to attend, distraction are high at home, internet issues which leads to difficulty in working uninterruptedly. At the same time, according to some women, they feel that there is low productivity, lots of disturbance, difficult to maintain team work, the work load increases resulting in low energy levels. It is also said that it is not fun working online, they need to do office/school work along with household chores at the same time. The imbalance internet connection and distractions at home lead to frustration which results in lack of concentration. There is no fixed working hours other as they are expected to work even after office timings.

Some of the advantages of working at office are: productivity is high, travelling time is avoided, they have more time for work and personal life, they can prioritize their work and

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additional time can be put in the evenings. Distribution of work according to schedule can be easily done, they have more time to spend with their family and can be available at home in case of any emergency. At the same time, according to some women, they feel that there is high and better productivity, less disturbance, they can finish their tasks quickly and efficiently, they connect to many people and meet new people, there is limited working hours/ fixed working hours, face to face interaction with the client, colleagues play a vital role in better performance.

According to Men, they prefer work from home and a mix of both while women prefer work at office. According to Men, their work satisfaction ranges from moderate to high at workplace. The same can be seen at home too. For women, it is high at workplace and moderate to high at home. According to Men, they feel that social anxiety plays an important role in life satisfaction because they feel that when they are anxious about the result or outcome of their work, they find it difficult to concentrate which leads to low life satisfaction. At the same time women feel that individuals who are outgoing and extroverts tend to become depressed as they lack in socialization, their comfort zone. When they receive calls, they become anxious if the call is regarding a good news or a bad news. When other individuals pass comments, give suggestions without knowing the process or the system and getting feedbacks immediately from others.

Scope

The findings of the study help to recognize the nuances of work environment which enables to enhance self-esteem and life satisfaction. It also highlights on pros and cons of working from home and office. Findings could be considered and further studied in detail to understand factors that affect self-esteem and life satisfaction and provide support.

Limitations of the present study

This study did not consider the various factors that define work from home and office. The sample age group was very diverse.

Suggestions

This study helps to understand the various aspects of work and its effect on self-esteem and life satisfaction. It could be further researched considering another sample group.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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